



24 October 2022

Parliamentary Budget Office Activity Report

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At a glance

This report provides an update on Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) activities since the last activity report of 24 March 2022. As that report was shorter than normal, this report provides an update covering the period 1 January 2022 to 30 September 2022. The report outlines key activities across our five functional areas:

- The Election commitments report (ECR) was delivered on 14 July 2022, a once in 3 year report that provided detail and financial information on 314 election commitments.
- Parliamentary requests peaked to a three year high in the six months to 30 June 2022. Simultaneously, the median time to completion was reduced by half. In the first quarter of 2022-23, the volume of requests has moderated. Completion times have marginally increased, reflecting the new elements and complexity involved in these requests.
- The self-initiated work program slowed in the lead up to the election to enable us to focus on the ECR and parliamentary requests. Post-election, work has been published on the national fiscal outlook, budget process, budget glossary terms, and fuel taxation. We have also updated our guidance on the costing and prioritisation framework.
- In response to feedback in the 46th parliament, we have scaled up our stakeholder outreach and engagement, proactively engaging with the members of the 47th parliament. This has included briefings and seminars, as well as improving the accessibility and diversity of our publications.
- We have also invested in people and systems over the period, including in our ICT capability. We have delivered a corporate plan and annual report. We have continued to change how we work to improve our agility and give us the flexibility to operate in the COVID-19 environment.

Looking ahead, we will continue to focus on the timeliness and accuracy of our outputs, expand our self-initiated work program, build on our investments in ICT technology and our people, as well as enhance our stakeholder engagement program.

Introduction

This report provides a high-level overview of PBO activities for the period covered by this report, and more detail in sections based on the five functional areas of the PBO:

- Election Commitments Report
- Policy Costing and Budget Analysis
- Self-initiated work
- External Engagement
- People and Systems.

A summary of planned activities against each of these functions is provided in Figure 1.

What is the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)?

The PBO was established in 2012 to ‘inform the Parliament by providing independent and non-partisan analysis of the budget cycle, fiscal policy and the financial implications of proposals’ (Section 64B of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*).

We do this in 3 main ways:

- by responding to requests made by senators and members for costings of policy proposals or for analysis of matters relating to the budget
- by publishing a report after every election that provides transparency around the fiscal impact of the election commitments of major parties, and
- by conducting and publishing self-initiated work that enhances the public understanding of the budget and fiscal policy settings.

Further information and an introduction to PBO's services is available here: [Guide to services of the Parliamentary Budget Office \(PBO\)](#).

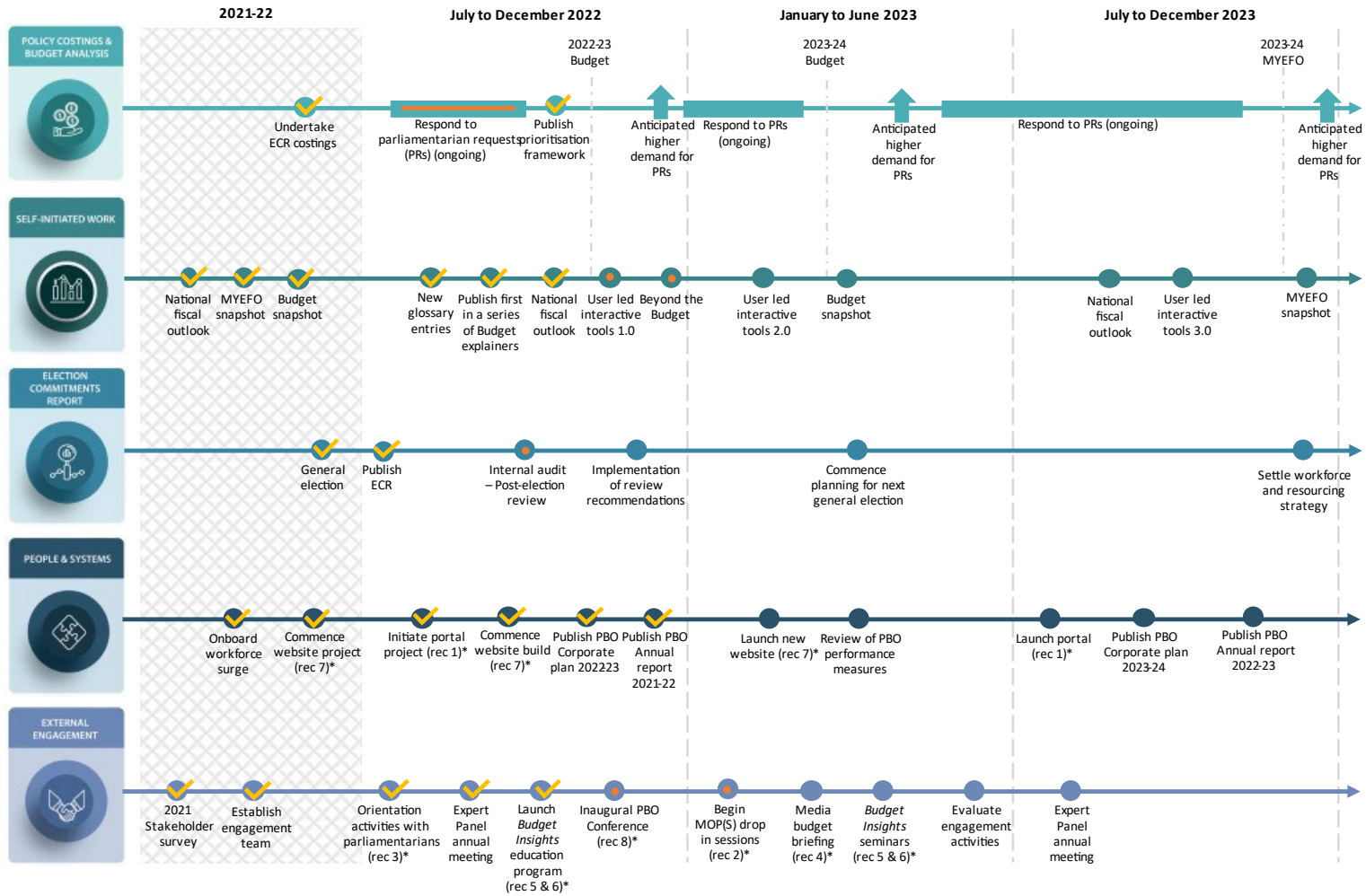


PLANNED ACTIVITIES BY FUNCTION

JULY 2022 TO DECEMBER 2023

LEGEND

- ✓ ACTIVITY COMPLETE
- ACTIVITY COMMENCED
- * REFERENCE TO STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RECOMMENDATION



Our Activities in detail

In the period from 1 January 2022 to 30 September 2022, the PBO’s focus was on supporting parliamentarians prepare for the election held in May 2022, and on the commencement of the new 47th parliament. This included prioritising the resolution of parliamentary requests, delivering the Election commitments report (ECR), and engaging with new and returning parliamentarians. We have re-started our self-initiated work agenda and invested in people and systems to better support the quality and timely delivery of PBO’s outputs.

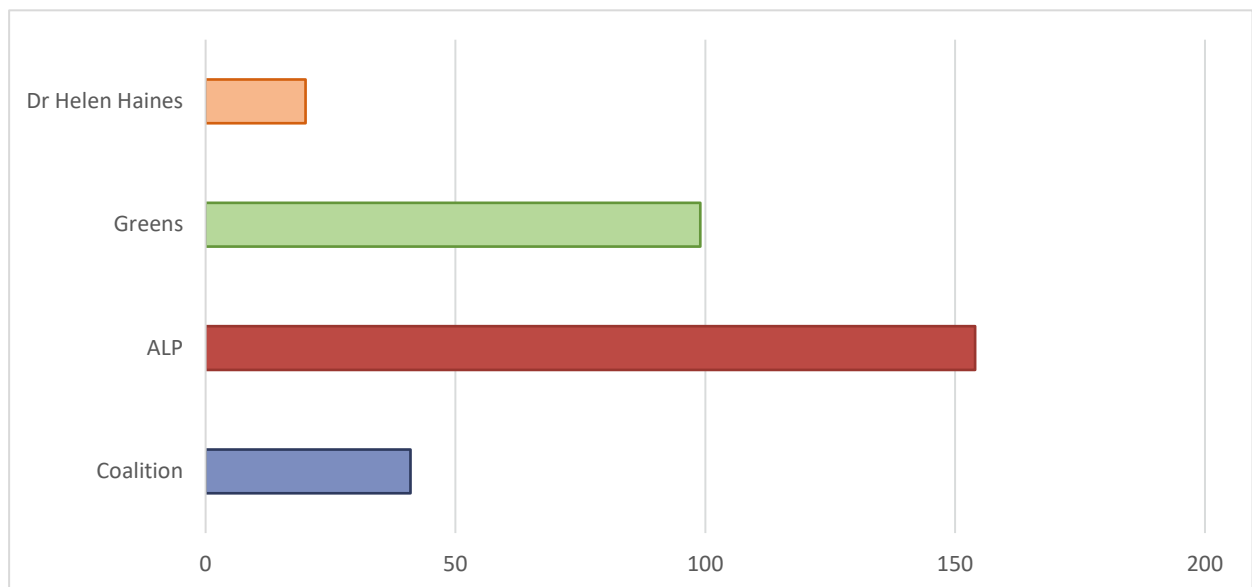
2022 Election commitments report

The preparation and delivery of the ECR was our main focus in the first six months of 2022 – a once in 3-year report publishing costed election commitments for all major parties. The report was published within our legislated deadline on 14 July 2022 ([2022 Election commitments report](#)).

The ECR is required to include the commitments of the major parliamentary parties (the Coalition, Australian Labor Party and Australian Greens) and may include the commitments of the minor parties and independents if they choose. The independent member for Indi, Dr Helen Haines MP, elected to be included in the 2022 report.

The report includes commitments expected to have a material impact on the Australian Government budget. In the lead-up to the election, the PBO identified and assessed almost 2,000 relevant election commitments and determined that 314 of these met the criteria for inclusion in the report. Of those items, 41 were commitments by the Coalition, 154 by the Australian Labor Party, 99 by the Australian Greens, and 20 by the independent member for Indi. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Election commitments by group included in the ECR



The ECR helps parliament by creating a record of all the promises made during an election and their impact on the budget. The process gives non-government parties and independents access to costings and supports further policy debate.

ECR - Preparation

In the lead-up to the election, we published four guidance notes assisting parliamentarians understand the ECR processes and products. These were:

- *How minor parties and independents can opt in to the PBO's election commitments report* (13 July 2021) – information on the process to opt in to the ECR.
- *The election commitments report: overview* (18 August 2021) – information on how the PBO plans to approach key aspects for the ECR, including medium term estimates, default assumptions, and the process for confirming the inclusion of election commitments.
- *Costing policy proposals during the caretaker period* (18 August 2021) – information on the PBO process for costing proposals and publication arrangements during the caretaker period.
- *2022 PBO election commitments report* (11 April 2022) – information on the report, including guidance on arrangements for engaging with parliamentary parties.

Over the period from 1 January 2022 we prioritised preparation of the ECR, which included resolving outstanding parliamentary requests, and improving our responsiveness to new requests. We bolstered our resources by seconding staff from public service agencies and other parliamentary departments. We also developed a new in-house tool using SharePoint and PowerBI to aggregate election commitment information and quality assure information for the report.

ECR - Delivery

This election the ECR included innovations in presentation and behind the scenes mechanics to significantly improve the way in which the report was able to be prepared and presented.

The report included a summary of each party's platform and budget impacts of each election commitment, against the 2022 Pre-election and Economic Fiscal Outlook baseline. Financial implications were estimated over the period to 2032-33 (the medium term), and documentation for each costing, matching the nature of each commitment, was included. In some cases, this included distributional impacts of commitments (such as by state or income bracket).

Other innovations for 2022 included more context and charts (especially comparative charts) in the report and publication in HTML rather than just a pdf document.

ECR - Evaluation

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, our internal audit program for 2022-23 includes an audit of managing the peak demand related to the ECR. This will examine the preparation for and delivery of the ECR, as well as considering how we can most effectively and efficiently build on this to prepare for the next ECR. This internal audit is currently underway, and its findings are expected to be considered by management by the end of 2022. This will be the first time the ECR has been considered by internal audit, rather than an internally led review.

Policy costings and budget analysis

The lead up to the election is a period of peak demand for high quality and confidential policy costing and budget analysis services provided to parliamentarians. Active management of the distribution of work across the costing function supported staff wellbeing and avoided extended periods of localised work pressure.

Requests from parliamentarians and parliamentary parties

2021-22 January to June

Over the whole year of 2021-22, we received a total of 3,241 requests, of which 2,180, or just over two thirds, were received in the six months to June 2022. This represented a far greater level of demand compared to the last financial year and is comparable to the level of demand experienced during the previous election year (2018–19), as illustrated in Figure 3.

In the six months to June 2022, we completed 1,638 requests including 316 initiated for the purposes of publishing the ECR. This included 2 ECR related requests that related to the interaction between commitments. The average and median time for completion of these requests is shown in Table 1.

At the same time as receiving record volumes of requests, we were able to progressively reduce the median time to completion from 34 working days in Quarter 2, to 18 working days in Quarter 3 and 16 working days in Quarter 4, against a 15 working day benchmark.

Figure 3: Requests from Parliamentarians – received and completed

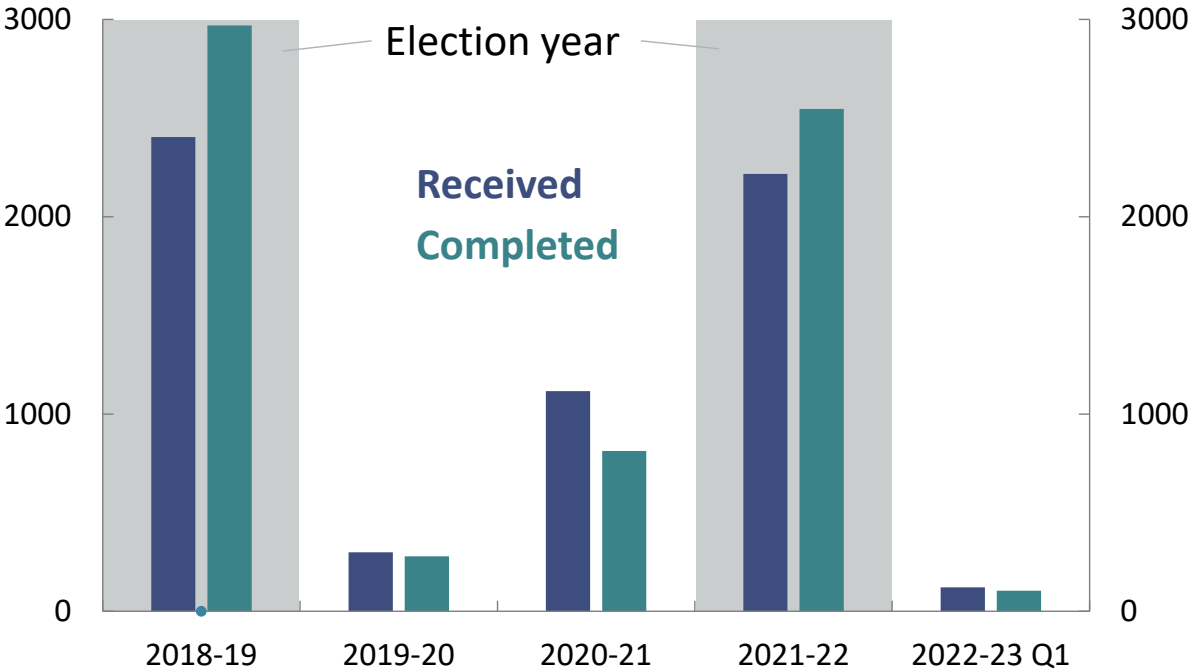


Table 1: Costing and budget analysis request performance

				2021-22				Total	22-23 Q1
	18-19 total	19-20 total	20-21 total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Requests outstanding at start of period	586	20	40	343	483	433	473	343	35
Requests received in period	3,014 ^(a)	332	1,253	458	603	819	1,361 ^{(b)(c)}	3,241 ^{(b)(c)}	122
Requests completed in period	2,970 ^(a)	279	813	299	613	713	925	2,550 ^{(b)(c)}	105
Requests withdrawn in period	610	33	137	19	40	66	874	999 ^(d)	3
Requests outstanding at end of period	20	40	343	483	433	473	35 ^(c)	35 ^(c)	49
Average time to completion (business days)	18	27	31	34	34	27	15	29	20
Median time to completion (business days)	12	25	25	35	34	18	16	18	19

Note, the table identifies the number of 'options' received by the PBO, noting that a single request can contain multiple options. The number of options for a request is assessed as part of confirming the exact specification of the request.

- (a) This includes 429 costings prepared for the 2019 Election commitments report.
- (b) This includes 316 costings prepared for the 2022 Election commitments report. 314 costings were for commitments by parties and 2 additional costings were for interactions between policies.
- (c) In preparing this report we re-examined metadata for the last quarter of 2021-22 and recalculated the number of options to ensure consistency with the metadata used for the first quarter of 2022-23. This has led to an upwards revision of 25 requests received, 3 completed and 22 outstanding, compared to the calculation used for the 2021-22 Annual Report.
- (d) Most of these requests were automatically withdrawn due to the expiration of the 46th Parliament in accordance with the PBO's legislative mandate which does not allow requests to carry over between parliaments.

2022-23 – year to date

In the period from 1 July to 30 September 2022, we received 122 requests for costings and budget analyses. We responded to 105 requests, at an average turnaround time of 20 business days and a median time to completion of 19 business days (see Table 1). We are pleased to have been able to sustain the performance improvements seen since January 2022. This will allow us to deliver timely responses for requests from new parliamentarians and incumbent parliamentarians who are using our services for the first time.

As the year continues, we will endeavour to maintain this level of performance and respond to requests for costings and budget analyses, prioritising them in a manner consistent with our published prioritisation framework.

Timeliness

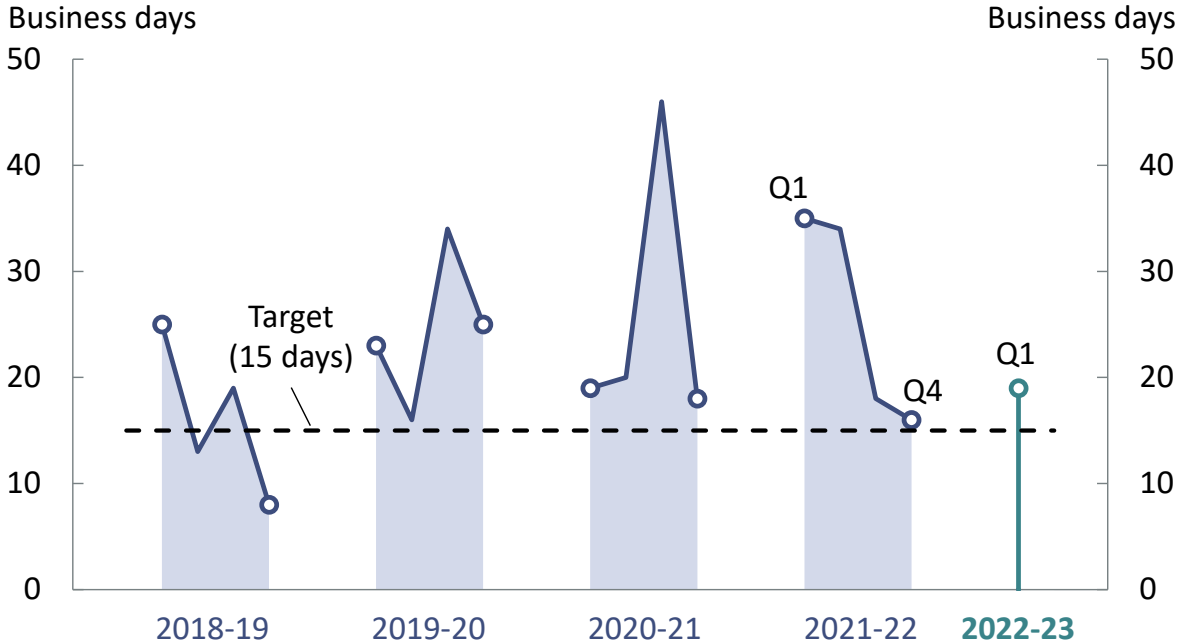
A key focus over the period has been to improve the time to completion of requests. Figure 4 illustrates how this changes over time. The significant improvement in timeliness achieved since 1 January 2022 reflected both a greater level of familiarity with particular requests and a conscious effort to change how we organised ourselves to respond to them. Around two thirds of the annual request volume was received from 1 January to 30 June 2022, and our response time was able to be halved.

The median time taken to complete requests reflects a variety of factors including the volume of requests we have on hand, their priority and complexity, as well as the experience level and availability of our staff.

More complex requests include those involving detailed policy matters, those which require expert consultation, the construction of new models, acquisition of new data or which contain numerous options or policy components. A costing that has these features will take longer to complete than a simpler request would take.

On 2 September 2022, we published an updated guide to the costing and prioritisation process, that provides more detail on how the PBO approaches responding to Parliamentary requests.

Figure 4: Median time taken to respond to requests by quarter



Requests by the PBO for Information from agencies

We continue to have highly collaborative and cooperative relationships with other Commonwealth agencies. These agencies provide us with key information and models, as well as help us to understand programs to support the provision of robust costings and analyses. Table 2 below provides high level performance data for Commonwealth agencies. The tables below provide information for individual agencies from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022 (Table 3) and the first quarter of 2022-23 (Table 4).

Table 2: Responses to PBO information requests

	2017–18 Total	2018–19 Total	2019–20 Total	2020–21 Total	2021–22 Total	2022–23 Q1
Responses received in period	429	549	175	523	538	21
Percentage received on time (%)	99	98	99	99	99	100
Average response time (business days)	9	7	12	11	6	12

Five responses to requests for information were late in 2021-22 (Table 3), while all responses received between 1 July 2022 and 30 September 2022 were on time (Table 4).

Table 3: Information request responsiveness by agencies 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2022

Commonwealth entity	Responses received in period	Average of Time taken to respond (business days)	Responses received after due date	Per cent late
Attorney-General's Department	4	5	0	0%
Australian Taxation Office	29	3	0	0%
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	10	4	0	0%
Department of Defence	10	8	0	0%
Department of Education, Skills and Employment	26	4	0	0%
Department of Finance	55	5	0	0%
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	5	4	0	0%
Department of Health	32	5	3	9%
Department of Home Affairs	29	7	0	0%
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources	15	5	0	0%
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	20	5	0	0%
Department of Social Services	57	11	0	0%
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	2	6	1	50%
Department of the Treasury	53	5	0	0%
Department of Veterans Affairs	38	6	0	0%
National Indigenous Australians Agency	4	7	0	0%
Services Australia	9	3	0	0%
Total	398	6	4	1%

Table 4: Information request responsiveness by agencies between 1 July 2022 and 30 September 2022

Department/Agency	Responses received in period	Average of Time taken to respond (business days)	Responses received after due date	Per cent late
Australian Taxation Office	4	2	0	0%
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	3	9	0	0%
Department of Education	1	5	0	0%
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations	1	5	0	0%
Department of Health and Aged Care	1	4	0	0%
Department of Home Affairs	1	10	0	0%
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications and the Arts	2	11	0	0%
Department of Social Services	4	35	0	0%
Department of the Treasury	3	8	0	0%
Department of Veterans Affairs	1	11	0	0%
Total	21	12	0	0%

Note: this table reflects Machinery of Government changes announced on 1 July 2022.

Publicly referenced costings

Table 5 shows the PBO costings or budget analyses that have been publicly referenced by parliamentarians for the first time in the period from 1 January 2022 to 30 September 2022. Previous references and releases are available in earlier versions of this report. This data includes references to costings that have been publicly released (and subsequently published on the PBO website), and those that have not been publicly released by the requesting parliamentarian, where there is a first public reference to the PBO. Subsequent public references of PBO costings or budget analyses are excluded from the table.

Over the period and excluding the ECR, the following costings have been publicly released on the PBO website:

- *Legacy of ongoing Morrison Government fossil fuel handouts* (released 20 September 2022)
- *Stage 3 tax cuts distributional analysis* (released 30 August 2022)
- *Changing the definition of “fuel efficient cars” in Section 25.1(4) of the Luxury Car Tax Act 2008* (released 18 August 2022)
- *2019 Indi Election Commitments* (released 29 March 2022).

Table 5: Costings or budget analysis publicly referenced for the first time between 1 January 2022 and 30 September 2022

Description of policy announcement	Party or Parliamentarian announcing policy	Method of Announcement	Date of announcement	Date of release of costing minute on the PBO website
Benefit of Stage 3 tax cuts for Federal Members of Parliament	Australian Greens	Media release	26 September 2022	Costing minute not released
Subsidies for petrol hybrid vehicles	Adam Bandt MP	Media release	21 September 2022	Costing minute not released
Legacy of ongoing Morrison Government fossil fuel handouts	Adam Bandt MP	Online media article	20 September 2022	20 September 2022
Stage 3 tax cuts distributional analysis	Australian Greens	Online media article	21 August 2022	30 August 2022
Judicial Pensions	Andrew Bragg MP	Print media article	14 July 2022	Costing minute not released
2022 federal election caretaker period - Australian Labor Party costings*	Australian Labor Party	Various	Various	14 July 2022 in the 2022 Election commitments report
2022 federal election caretaker period - Australian Greens costings*	Australian Greens	Various	Various	14 July 2022 in the 2022 Election commitments report
2022 federal election caretaker period - Dr Helen Haines MP costings*	Dr Helen Haines MP	Various	Various	14 July 2022 in the 2022 Election commitments report
Earlier Access to the Age Pension	Senator Janet Rice	Online media article	10 April 2022	Costing minute not released
Aged Care	Australian Labor Party	Media release	10 April 2022	Costing minute not released
Billionaire Pandemic Levy	Australian Greens	Online media article	10 April 2022	Costing minute not released
Floor price for carbon farmers	Adam Bandt MP	Media release	7 April 2022	Costing minute not released
Genuinely free public schools	Adam Bandt MP	Media release	7 April 2022	Costing minute not released
Wiping Student Debt	Senator Mehreen Faruqi	Online media article	24 March 2022	Costing minute not released
Wiping Student Debt vs Stage 3 Tax Cuts	Senator Mehreen Faruqi	Online media article	24 March 2022	Costing minute not released
Guaranteed Liveable Income	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Online media article	20 March 2022	Costing minute not released
Reinstating Regional Doctor Incentives	Mr Mark Butler MP	Interview transcript	8 March 2022	Costing minute not released

Description of policy announcement	Party or Parliamentarian announcing policy	Method of Announcement	Date of announcement	Date of release of costing minute on the PBO website
Universal Childcare and Early Education	Senator Mehreen Faruqi	Online media article	6 March 2022	Costing minute not released
Looking After Coal Workers	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Online media article	25 February 2022	Costing minute not released
Repurposing Snowy Hydro into a not-for profit retailer and public generator	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Online media article	18 February 2022	Costing minute not released
Home Battery Incentive Scheme	Dr Helen Haines MP	House of Representatives Amendment Bill	14 February 2022	Costing minute not released
Truth and Justice Commission	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Online media article	23 January 2022	Costing minute not released
Air Filters for Schools	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Online media article	23 January 2022	Costing minute not released

*During the 2022 federal election caretaker period, the Australian Labor Party, the Australian Greens and Dr Helen Haines MP announced a number of policies with analysis attributed to the PBO, including through the release of the Australian Labor Party's fiscal plan *Labor's plan for a better future* and the Australian Greens policy document *Powering past coal and gas*. These announcements were published across a range of media platforms. While no PBO costing minutes were publicly released during the caretaker period, costing minutes relating to those policies were included in the PBO's *2022 Election commitments report*, which was released on 14 July 2022.

Note: While the PBO endeavours to capture all policy announcements that reference PBO costings, there may be announcements missing from the table above, for example, because the announcement was not reflected in any media monitored by the PBO.

Evaluations

Following the completion of the ECR, we have commenced a process to evaluate our key costing models. These evaluations will include consultation with those agencies responsible for the implementation of relevant election commitments.

Our program of work to develop and publish user led interactive tools has already included the evaluation of some models. Recommendations aimed at improving the robustness and scope of these models are being implemented.

Self-initiated work

The self-initiated work program slowed down in the run up to the election, to enable a focus on parliamentary requests and the ECR. Nevertheless, we maintained some publications to improve transparency and public understanding of the budget and fiscal issues.

We retain flexibility within our self-initiated work program and regularly re-evaluate our priorities, given our available resources, throughout the year. We undertake projects of varying size and complexity under the following themes:

- fiscal sustainability
- medium- and long-term fiscal risks, with a focus on climate change

- improving understanding of the budget
- distributional analysis, with a focus on gender.

The following self-initiated publications have been released since the last activity report:

- *2022-23 Budget snapshot*, published on 29 March 2022, provided a graphical summary of the information contained in the 2022-23 March Budget.
- *Guide to the 2022-23 Budget*, published on 31 March 2022, updated our guide to navigating the budget papers and explained where to find key information in them.
- *Fuel taxation in Australia*, published on 21 September 2022 was released as part of our Budget Explainer Series. It examined the system of fuel taxation, including the major components, how they work together and the impact of government policy.
- *Overview of the budget process*, published on 27 September 2022, was our first Budget Insights factsheet. It provided a summary of the Australian Government's budget process focussing on planning and prioritising, spending and monitoring, and reporting and reviewing.
- *National fiscal outlook: As at 2022-23 Budgets*, published on 5 October 2022. This was the ninth edition of our annual update of government finances combining Commonwealth, State and local government data. The report was accompanied by a comprehensive set of charts, published as *National fiscal outlook: At a glance*, also published on 5 October 2022.

We have also continued to add to the database of historical fiscal data. The dataset includes historical time series from the *2022-23 March Budget* update in an easily accessible form, as well as data collated from many earlier years.

Over the period we also updated our Budget Glossary entries, to explain key budget terminology.

Our self-initiated work continues to be positively received. We continue to present and discuss the results of our work, including through presentations to external conferences such as the 2022 Australian Conference of Economists on our Bracket creep Budget explainer.

Our forward program in the run up to the end of the year includes a 2022-23 October Budget snapshot and related materials; and our medium-term projections publication - *Beyond the budget*.

External engagement

A key priority for the PBO is to enhance our interactions with parliamentarians, their staff, and committees. We are committed to continual improvement in our service delivery and to making our work accessible to our audience. This includes seeking stakeholder feedback and responding to it.

We also continue to enhance our engagement capability through targeted training for PBO staff. We have new activities in development such as the Budget Insights education program, an extended range of information publications and our first PBO conference to be held in November 2022.

Stakeholder survey

Each term of parliament we conduct a stakeholder survey to measure our performance and to ensure high standards and quality services are maintained. Better understanding the needs of parliamentarians supports our role in improving public understanding of the budget and fiscal policy

issues. A survey was undertaken in September 2021, and the findings have been implemented over 2022. (The report and recommendations can be seen on the [PBO website](#).)

The survey results indicated high levels of satisfaction with our services, with some areas for improvement including through initiatives to enhance parliamentarianism:

- awareness of PBO services through more active outreach to parliamentarians and their staff
- experience of PBO services through better tailoring services to different requirements, including timeliness and the way we interact with parliamentarians and their staff
- ease of access to PBO information, including improving the user focus of our website and making information easier to find.

Activities over the period of this report have aimed to address this feedback.

Induction for the 47th Parliament

We developed and delivered a new induction program for members of the 47th Parliament and their staff to increase awareness of our services and how to reach out to us. This included refresher sessions with staff from the Parliamentary Library and the Department of the Senate.

Welcome letters and a new guide to our services brochure was sent to all new parliamentarians and re-elected parliamentarians unlikely to have previously used our services. Briefings have been conducted for parliamentarians from all parties, and several group briefings have also been delivered. We also partnered with other parliamentary departments to offer group induction briefings.

As at 30 September 2022, the following outreach activities have been delivered:

- Senate School – orientation session for new Senators
- House of Representatives – orientation session for new Members
- Individual parliamentarian briefings
- Briefing for staff of the Research Branch, Parliamentary Library
- Briefing for Secretariat staff of Senate Committees
- 130 welcome letters delivered to parliamentarians of the new Parliament
- Over 1200 welcome emails to staff of parliamentarians

These briefings have largely been delivered face to face.

PBO Expert Panel

The PBO continues to seek input from our expert panel and external stakeholders throughout the year to assist with the development and evaluation of its work program and methodologies, improve the quality of our analysis, and to review pieces of work before publication. On the 20th and 21st of September 2022 we held our annual meetings with our panel of expert advisors. We discussed highlights from the previous year, including the ECR, and our research agenda for the upcoming year.

Digital engagement statistics

The following charts provide some statistics from the PBO website, to illustrate interest in PBO products.

Figure 5: Online Budget Glossary – Page views and average time on page - monthly

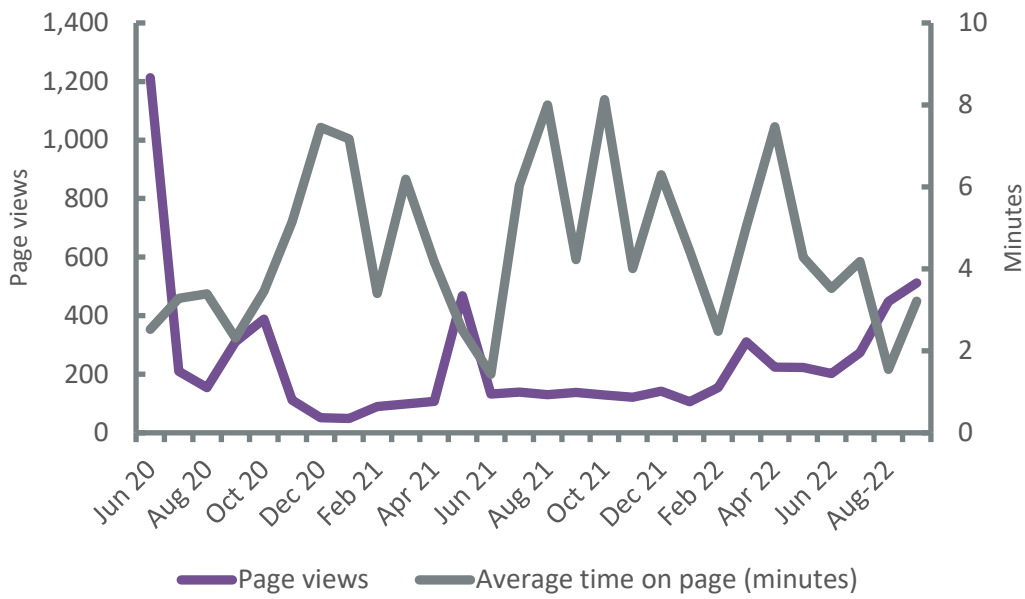


Figure 6: PDI calculator – Webpage views – monthly

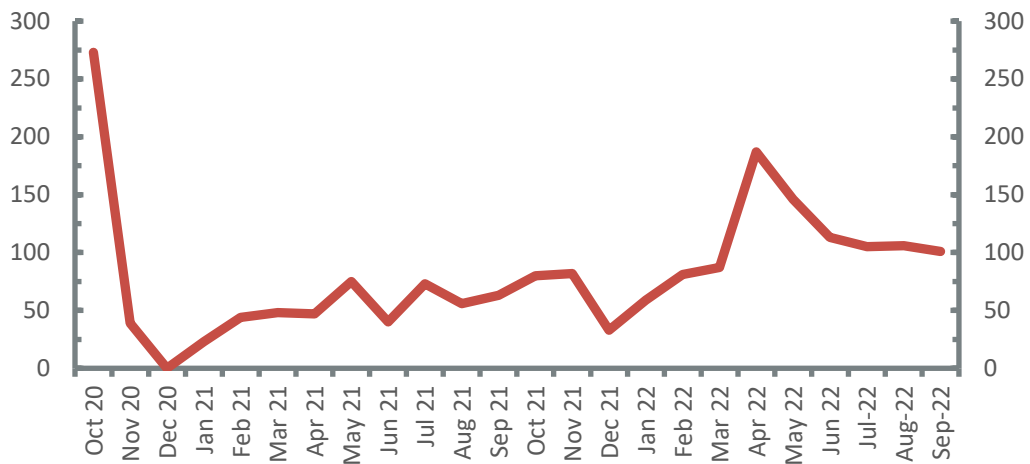
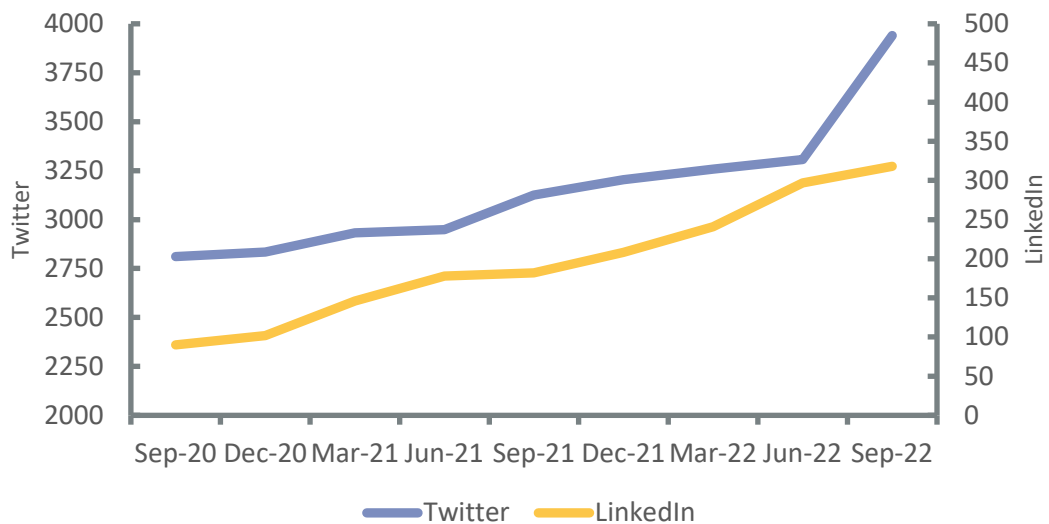


Figure 7: Social media – growth in followers



People and systems

To support us to deliver effectively over the period of this report, we have invested in our people and systems in three key areas:

- OnePBO – a refresh of our organisational approach to enhance operational flexibility and support timely fit for purpose outputs that add value and reflect the needs of our clients
- investment in our people, to enhance team efficiency and effectiveness and support everyone to expand their skills, experience, and capabilities
- modernisation of our tools and systems including website upgrades and digital tools that are more user focused.

As part of the preparations to update our Corporate plan, we undertook a series of workshops to clarify our vision and values and to refresh our organisational approach. We have also used our upgraded ICT environment to provide visibility of activity across the organisation.

We published our 2022-23 Corporate plan on 1 September 2022 ([Corporate plan 2022–23](#)), following consultation with the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA). It serves as our primary planning document, outlining our approach and strategic priorities for the next 4 years (2022-23 to 2025-26). Our annual report for 2021-22 was also completed on 17 October 2022 ([Annual Report 2021-22](#)).

Quality assurance

The PBO is committed to the delivery of robust and trusted products. We use our quality assurance processes to maintain and, where necessary, improve the robustness of our self-initiated outputs, our responses to requests from Parliamentarians and our accountability reporting. In 2022-23 we will continue to mature our processes to reflect the changing nature of our work and systems.

ICT Investments

The PBO operates in a modern, collaborative, and integrated cloud-based ICT environment. We continually utilise this new capability to streamline and automate key business and quality control processes. In 2022-23 we will continue to look for improvements and extend this to make our information more accessible and engaging and to improve the experience for clients looking to request costings and budget analyses.

Website project

A project is underway to redevelop our website, enabling better access for our staff to manage the site and to improve the way it supports users. These improvements will be achieved through a refresh of the information architecture, improved search functionality and enhancing the interactivity of tools and charts available on the site.

We anticipate delivering the new website by the end of Quarter 3 2022-23, subject to the scope and availability of resources.

Parliamentarian portal

In response to the stakeholder survey feedback, initial work has commenced with the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) on a self-service portal that allows authorised users to submit, manage, and download costings and budget analysis requests. This will be supported by real-time management of status and prioritisation of requests.

Scope has been finalised and agreed with DPS and PBO. Delivery will depend on a range of factors impacting the relative demands on ICT resources across the Parliament. We anticipate delivering this capability in full prior to the next federal election.

Organisational reviews and APS census

JCPAA review

The *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* (PS Act) provides for the JCPAA to request an independent review of the PBO after each general election.

Section 64T of the PS Act specifies that any review must be completed within 9 months after the end of the caretaker period for the election. The JCPAA advised there would not be a formal review of this type after the 46th parliament. We will continue to work with the JCPAA on matters of interest to them and to the Parliament more generally.

APS Census

We participated in the APSC's Employee Census for the second time in 2022. There were high levels of engagement with an 84% response rate. While this is lower than the prior year (2021 response rate: 98%), this is likely due to the timing of the census coinciding with the peak election period.

Results were circulated to all staff in August 2022, and a staff-led survey working group is in the process of formation to work through actions going forward.

Review into Parliamentary culture

We continue to work closely with the other Parliamentary departments to effectively coordinate responding to the Jenkins review and associated matters, including the Foster review and any recommendations from Comcare.

The PBO is supporting this work at several levels, particularly through the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Chief Operating Officer.

We have appointed two internal Harassment Contact Officers (HCO), who have undertaken training with the Department of Parliamentary Services.

Staffing and training

Staffing

At 29 September 2022, we had 43.86 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff (headcount: 46). In 2022–23, the PBO is estimating an average staffing level (ASL) of 44.

We are continuing to participate in the Parliament of Australia graduate program; 7 graduates from the 2022 program are joining the PBO for periods of 4 to 6 months over the course of the 2022 calendar year. Applications for the 2023 Parliament of Australia graduate program are now open.

Response to COVID-19

We continue to follow ACT Health advice and the advice of the Presiding Officers in relation to working arrangements at APH, whilst considering the operational needs of the agency and key person risk. Responding to and managing COVID-19 is now embedded into our business-as-usual processes.

Staff training

We have continued to undertake corporate training on an organisation wide basis. We run an internal seminar series that covers a range of analytical and corporate topics. Presenters for these sessions included key internal subject matter experts and external speakers.

Next steps

Over the period covered by this report, the PBO has sought to respond to stakeholder feedback to improve the timeliness of our products, better tailor them to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders, lift awareness of PBO services, and enhance our direct engagement with parliamentarians. This remains a work in progress, and over the next period, we aim to continue to mature how we do this.

Our investment in new ICT solutions to improve the user experience of our website and costing and budget analysis services should make information easier to find and streamline service delivery.

We will continue to look for ways to improve our timeliness and better understand and report on the drivers of our performance.

We have a significant publication schedule over the rest of the year, including our suite of flagship publications related to the 2022-23 Budget and fiscal sustainability, as well as expanding our stable of budget explainers, insights and bites. We also hope to build on the success of our PDI calculator and rollout more user led interactive tools.

The outcomes from the ECR evaluation will inform a roadmap for improvements for the next report.

We will continue to expand the opportunities for parliamentarians to engage with us, including through a regular schedule of drop-in sessions and Budget Insight seminars. The PBO Conference on 3 November 2022 will also provide an opportunity to reflect on how we can enhance our services further.

We look forward to keeping the committee informed of these developments.